

**Draft Summary of the Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group Meeting  
Oroville Facilities Relicensing (FERC Project No. 2100)  
November 21, 2002**

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) hosted a meeting for the Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group on November 21, 2002 in Oroville.

A summary of the discussion, decisions made, and action items is provided below. This summary is not intended to be a transcript, analysis of the meeting, or to indicate agreement or disagreement with any of the items summarized, except where expressly stated. The intent is to present a summary for interested parties who could not attend the meeting. The following are attachments to this summary:

Attachment 1	Meeting Agenda
Attachment 2	Meeting Attendees
Attachment 3	Flip Chart Notes
Attachment 4	Status Update for Recreation and Socioeconomic Studies
Attachment 5	Lake Oroville Recreation Surveys – Preliminary Results II
Attachment 6	Lake Oroville Recreation Use Monitoring – Preliminary Results
Attachment 7	Preliminary Results – Study Plans R18 and R19

### **Introduction**

Attendees were welcomed to the Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group meeting. Attendees introduced themselves and their affiliations and the desired outcomes of the meeting were discussed. The meeting agenda and list of meeting attendees are appended to this summary as Attachments 1 and 2, respectively. Meeting flip chart notes are included as Attachment 3.

### **Action Items – September 26, 2002 Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group Meeting**

A summary of the September 26, 2002 Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group meeting is posted on the relicensing web site. No action items were identified at the September Work Group meeting.

### **Study Plan Implementation Update**

John Baas (EDAW) provided an update on all of the recreation/socioeconomic studies. Overall, all nineteen studies have been approved and funded, and all studies have started, except for SP-R17 (*Recreation Needs Analysis*). Also, the schedules for most studies have been accelerated, with completion dates in 2003; SP-R17, however, will be finalized in 2004. It was also noted that there would be additional consulting team staff involved in the completion of the studies including staff from EDAW's San Francisco and Seattle offices. John spoke briefly and answered questions about the status of each study via a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation; a hard-copy packet of the presentation was distributed to the Work Group participants and is included as Attachment 4 to this summary.

#### ***SP-R1 Public and Private Vehicular Access***

Garrett Duncan with the consulting team is leading this desktop study looking at public and private vehicular access. Its focus will be evaluating existing access and future planned road improvements in the project area. Staff is in the process of gathering maps and data to support the study. A draft report is scheduled for completion in April 2003, and the final report completed by June 2003; not including review time for the Work Group. Garrett clarified that this study is not evaluating railroad easements, only local and regional roadways serving the project area. One

participant inquired about the notification procedure for site visits due to concerns associated with cultural resource disturbances; all public requests to accompany researchers in the field during site visits should be coordinated through the Resource Area Managers (RAMs). One participant inquired whether there are qualitative criteria to evaluate roadways. John Baas pointed out that draft criteria have been developed and were appended to the study plan that was approved by the collaborative.

#### *SP-R2 Recreation Safety Assessment*

This desktop study will assess recreation safety in the project area. One participant suggested obtaining records from local hospitals; the consulting team pointed out that this was included in the study plan. This study is on schedule.

#### *SP-R3 Assess Relationship of Project Operations and Recreation*

This study is assessing the relationship between project operations and recreation and will include an interim report. Staff is in the process of compiling data. This study will need to merge and integrate operations data and the recreation survey data; this step will occur in 2003. John Baas confirmed that this study would consider reservoir elevations and temperature effects while another study would look at release rates (flows) and the effect on bike trail safety.

#### *SP-R4 Assess Relationship of Fish/Wildlife Management on Recreation and SP-R5 Assess Recreation Area Management*

These two studies focusing on fish/wildlife and recreation management will be completed in tandem. Study efforts to date have been limited to acquiring management plans.

#### *SP-R6 ADA Accessibility Assessment*

This recently-started desktop study will evaluate Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) issues associated with recreation areas throughout the project area and will focus on reviewing numerous other studies completed on ADA issues. One participant suggested evaluating the boat launching facilities at the Diversion Pool in the context of the ADA. The Work Group also recommended including the California Department of Boating and Waterways as a data source.

#### *SP-R7 Reservoir Boating Survey*

Fieldwork on the Reservoir Boating Study occurred during the 2002 survey season. The on-site boat counts have been logistically difficult, and as a result there will need to be additional fieldwork conducted in spring 2003. The participants discussed the effect of low-pool conditions (less than 725-feet) on boating and speculated that the current low pool conditions may be more persistent and 'normal' in the future license period due to rumored plans to increase withdrawals and delivery to southern California. DWR representatives indicated that there are no plans to change project operations at this point. The participants discussed other potential data sources and while previous boat counts are not available, DPR does have boat pass sales data that may be reviewed as part of this study. One participant asked if it was important to consider the relationship between current economic conditions and recreation activity. The participants agreed that would be difficult to separate from other recreation activity drivers.

#### *SP-R8 Carrying Capacity*

This study is evaluating the recreational carrying capacity of the project area. Carrying capacity is the term used to refer to the maximum recreation use of an area that would not impact associated natural resources and/or recreational quality. This study will rely on survey and observed data, and will be based on a recent "state-of-the-art" study completed by the U.S. Department of Interior.

#### *SP-R9 Existing Recreation Use Study*

The Existing Recreation Use study is using traffic and trail counters to collect data. Traffic counters have been installed in 25 locations and infrared trail counters have been placed at four locations throughout the project area. This study is behind schedule due to the late implementation of the

trail counters. One participant reiterated the need to consider economic and physical factors when evaluating recreation use levels; 2001 could potentially be a low-use season based on low-pool elevations and a slow economy. Another participant suggested that use could be higher as people stay closer to home to recreate.

#### *SP-R10 Recreation Facility and Condition Inventory*

The Recreation Facility and Condition Inventory study is ahead of schedule. Photographs have been taken of most facilities and the existing inventory is being updated.

#### *SP-R11 Recreation and Public Use Impact Assessment*

This study is evaluating the effect of recreation and public use on surrounding natural resources. This study commenced in October 2002 and a field visit is scheduled for December 2002; the study is on schedule. The inventory form that will be used in this study was included as an appendix to the study plan.

#### *SP-R12 Projected Recreation Use*

The Projected Recreation Use study is in its early stages, with the consultant team evaluating different models that have been used to forecast future recreation use. This study could potentially consider economic conditions in forecasting future use levels.

#### *SP-R13 Recreation Surveys*

The study update covered the recreation survey process that has been implemented for the project. Further details on the status of the survey process are presented below. Currently, there have been approximately 2,000 onsite surveys and 800 mail-back surveys completed; this corresponds to of the roughly 90% of those contacted agreed to complete the mail-back survey there has been a 40% response rate.

#### *SP-R14 Assess Regional Recreation and Barriers to Recreation*

This study is addressing regional recreation barriers to recreation. It is based on supply and demand factors related to recreation opportunities in the region. As such, it will look at other comparable recreation sites in the region. Additional data at off-site facilities will be compiled in January 2003.

#### *SP-R15 Recreation Suitability*

The Recreation Suitability study is in its early stages. The first task is to identify available mapping that could support this study.

#### *SP-R16 Whitewater and River Boating*

The consultant team is in the process of finalizing the survey instrument for the Whitewater and River Boating study. The Chico Paddleheads organization will be used as a focus group.

#### *SP-R17 Recreation Needs Analysis*

The Recreation Needs Analysis is the only study not yet started. Initiation of this study requires information developed in the other recreation studies undertaken as part of this project.

#### *SP-R18 Recreation Activity, Spending, and Associated Economic Impacts and SP-R19 Fiscal Impacts*

The status of these two socioeconomic studies was discussed by participants in the context of the update provided by Tom Wegge (TCW Economics), which is presented below.

### **Butte County Recreational Boating Access Presentation**

Rob MacKenzie (Butte County) made a presentation to the Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group on boating access issues on Lake Oroville. The photo presentation summarized two

kayaking trips on the lake made by Butte County representatives Michael Pierce and Rob that documented low-pool conditions on the reservoir at selected coves and access points. Rob suggested that numerous obstructions including submerged trees and logs chained to slopes that become exposed during low-pool elevations serve as a barrier to recreation and pose safety hazards to the public.

Several participants responded that the submerged trees provide a benefit to recreation by providing fish habitat and reducing houseboat crowding and limiting boat speeds in coves. The group agreed that the effects of low-pool elevations should not only be evaluated in the context of houseboat uses but also other recreation activities and one participant suggested that the presentation was biased and didn't show the majority of the lake that was usable. One potential PM&E measure suggested involves identification of other suitable houseboat areas around the lake (where submerged trees were not a problem) to be marked with low speed buoys.

The group discussed the potential to extend some of the boat launch roads past the 'boulder' barriers that also emerge as the lake level drops. DWR explained that many of those launch sites are actually pre-existing roads that are now degraded and would be very costly to extend for low lake level use. Scott Lawrence (Feather River Recreation and Parks District) suggested that the work group focus on potential PM&Es that would be available all or most of the time and not just when the lake is at low levels late in the season.

The Work Group questioned if modeling future lake-levels was feasible. The Facilitator responded that the Engineering/Operations Work Group is developing the modeling capabilities to provide this information to the Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group. The Work Group noted that based on such modeling results of potential future conditions, one approach might be to consider a proportionate distribution of mitigation funds based on the probability of lake levels reaching certain thresholds and the associated effects on recreational opportunities.

### **Preliminary Survey Results**

Jim Vogel with the consulting team presented an overview of the preliminary results from the recreation surveys and use monitoring data (see Attachment 5 and 6, respectively). These results are an update to previous results presented at the September 2002 Work Group meeting. There has been no additional data collected or processed for the regional recreation site or household surveys. Jim noted that the survey results are still preliminary; the results are based on approximately half of the data being processed to date. The monitoring data that included counts of the number of vehicles, trailers, and visitors at Oroville recreation sites represent data for the entire 2002-summer recreation season (May 25 to Sep 29). For specific results, please refer to Attachments 5 and 6.

The Work Group discussed the preliminary results as they were presented. Several participants expressed concern over the use of 2002 data as baseline because they believe that recreation use levels were low due to low pool elevations. One participant recommended that historical sales data from DPR could be used as the benchmark and correlated with lake levels. The consulting team confirmed that future projections would consider a range of baseline information and would also be presented as a range.

### **Study Plan Implementation Update (continued)**

Tom Wegge with the consulting team provided an update on SP-R18 and SP-R19. An initial set of community impact models have been developed for SP-R18 that will be presented to the Technical Review Team (TRT) at its next meeting in December 2002. These models represent a refinement of standard IMPLAN models. The next steps are to ground-truth and refine the community models. A Background Report is also in the process of being developed that will provide background

information applicable to both socioeconomic studies. Tom has defined a set of objectives and elements for the Background Report and has received comments from the TRT. Preliminary data for the community impact models and the Background Report were presented to the Work Group and are provided as Attachment 7 to this summary. Tom explained that this data addressed the following issues: sources of income, local revenue sources, sales activity, and expenditure data included in the mail-back recreation surveys.

Craig Jones representing the State Water Contractors reminded the participants that the Oroville Project is operating the way it was designed and intended to operate as a water supply project and the reservoir levels were designed to move up and down, as water is stored in the winter and released when needed during the summer and fall months. Perhaps a focus for PM&E measures should be on those areas that don't fluctuate as much such as the Afterbay/Forebay complex or the Diversion Pool area.

### **Next Steps**

The Facilitator informed the Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group about an issue that surfaced in the Cultural Resources Work Group that is applicable to all work groups – the recent identification of cultural resources during project survey work and exposure and resource damage of sensitive sites during low pool elevations. The Facilitator made it clear that a cultural resource management plan will be developed as part of the relicensing process based on federal and State requirements that afford protection to these resources by law. As it relates to the development of the new recreation plan, the collaborative will need to consider cultural resource sites and will be constrained when placing new recreation or other facilities. The Tribes have requested closure of three recreation sites around Lake Oroville for the near term and are requesting consideration of relocating the Enterprise boat ramp to a nearby location. DPR is currently using signage, security personnel, and gate closure at night until pool elevations reach 825-feet; DWR is acting under existing license conditions, independent of the relicensing process. Several members of the public objected to use restrictions at Foreman Creek and have made verbal and written comments on the issue. They were directed to the appropriate agencies to receive their comments on the current situation and invited to participate in the collaborative process as we develop management plans for both recreation and cultural resources for the future license period.

Based on the implementation schedule for the various recreation and socioeconomic study plans, the Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group agreed to cancel the December 2002 Work Group meeting and reschedule its January 2003 meeting. The Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group agreed on the following meeting date/time:

Date: Thursday, January 16, 2003  
Time: 6:00 to 10:00 PM  
Location: To be determined

### **Agreements Made**

1. The Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group agreed to cancel its December 2002 meeting.

### **Action Items**

The following list of action items identified by the Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group includes a description of the action, the participant responsible for the action, and item status.

**Action Item #R51:** Include Dept. of Boating & Waterways info for SP-R6.  
**Responsible:** Consultant Team  
**Due Date:** Ongoing

**Action Item #R52:** Ask Curtis Creel if there are plans to operate the reservoir at lower levels in the future (more water earlier to southern California).

**Responsible:** Facilitator

**Due Date:** January 16, 2003

**Action Item #R53:** Send study plan binder to J. Fletcher.

**Responsible:** Facilitator

**Due Date:** January 16, 2003